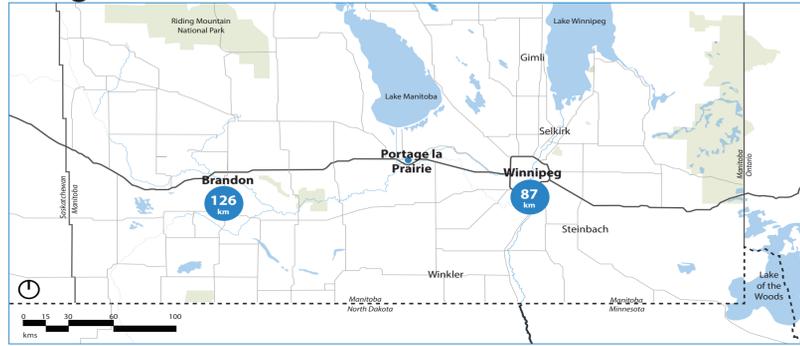


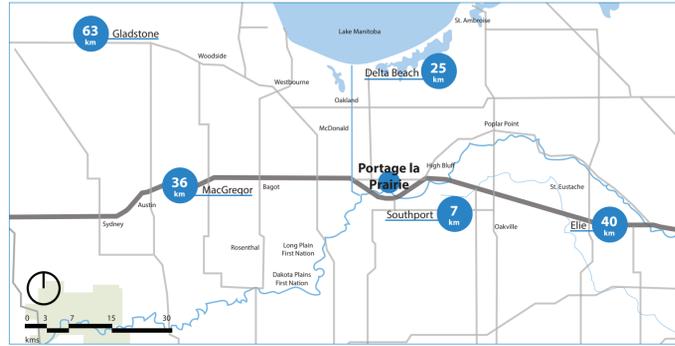
# Geographic Location

## Regional



The city of Portage la Prairie is located 87km from Manitoba's largest city, Winnipeg, 126km from the second largest city, Brandon and is intersected by the Trans-Canada Highway. The city is situated between the Assiniboine River to the south and Lake Manitoba to the north. One of the most distinct features of the city is Crescent Lake, an oxbow left behind by the meandering of the Assiniboine River.

## Local



Surrounded by the R.M. of Portage la Prairie, Portage serves as a major shopping, administrative, educational, recreational, and health centre for several towns in the vicinity. The larger centres of Macgregor (36km), Gladstone (63km), Delta Beach (25km), Southport (7km) and Elie (40km) are all within a short drive.

# An Ageing Population

## Spatial Distribution

Seen at right, two maps of Portage la Prairie highlight specific areas of concentration of older adults in the core downtown areas. The first map highlights the seniors' specific housing concentration to the east which contains seven seniors specific buildings and roughly 30% of all older adults in Portage.



Concentration of seniors' specific housing.

The second, highlights Saskatchewan Avenue as a major thoroughfare. The 400m buffer around it is a common representation of five minutes walk time by an able-bodied individual. Roughly 50% of all older adults in Portage live within five minutes walking distance of Saskatchewan Avenue.

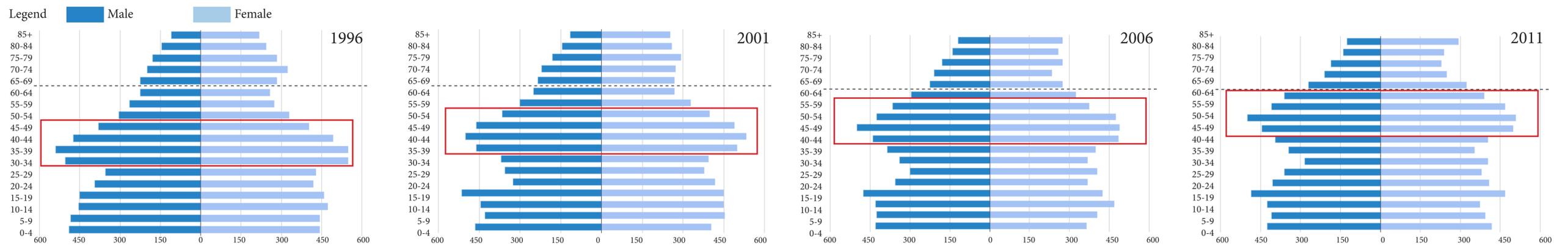


Five minute walking distance buffer around Saskatchewan Avenue.

These two representations show the current stock of seniors' housing. A large portion of Portage's population will soon be entering the 65+ age cohort and will likely be ageing in place throughout the city.

## Age Distribution

As of the 2011 National Census, Portage la Prairie's population was 12,996, with older adults (those in 65+ age cohorts) making up 17.5% of that population. Below, the population pyramids from the last four census periods for Portage sees the baby boomer population rising up through the graph. Across Canada, the first wave of this ageing "bubble" are now entering the 65+ age ranges which means much higher older adult populations can be expected.



# History

Portage la Prairie began as a trading post, serving as a crossroads for a booming fur trade and increased expansion to Canada's West. In 1881, the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed and passed directly through the city. Portage became one of the only places in Canada where both national main lines crossed. The rail line promoted growth and prosperity and in 1907, Portage was officially incorporated. The city continued to grow in the 20th Century becoming a major hub for agriculture and food processing. Today, Portage is the fourth largest metro area in Manitoba.



Saskatchewan Avenue in 1906.



A bird's eye view of Portage in 1920.



## Who we are

We are first year graduate students in the Master of City Planning program at the University of Manitoba. The goal of this project was to analyze Portage la Prairie from an age-friendly perspective. Based on our observations and community feedback, we have made suggestions to assist Portage with its goal of becoming a more age-friendly and complete community.

## Our Process

'Age-Friendly Portage la Prairie' was a three month project that involved:

- **Initial site visit.** We visited the city in early September. During this visit, the we met with the City Manager and members of the Age-friendly Cities Advisory Committee. A former Councilor made a presentation during the meeting, giving a brief overview of the age-friendly initiatives currently being implemented in Portage.
- **Field visits and document analysis.** We focused on the Centre on Aging's *Age-Friendly Cities Project: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada (2007)* and what Portage la Prairie accomplished in direct relation to the project. We then observed the current strengths and challenges facing Portage. For the purpose of our observations, we focused on the age-friendly domains identified by the World Health Organization's *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)*. In order to understand mobility in Portage, we took turns navigating the city using a wheelchair.
- **Attending HTFC consultation meetings with the City.** We visited the city throughout the term and attended several meetings with the consulting firm HTFC Planning and Design to understand the ongoing initiatives taking place in Portage.
- **Community consultations.** To obtain feed back from community members in Portage, we presented our initial analysis and later organized a community consultation session. This helped us identify possibilities for age-friendly suggestions and strategies.



Wheelchair mobility experiment



Community consultation



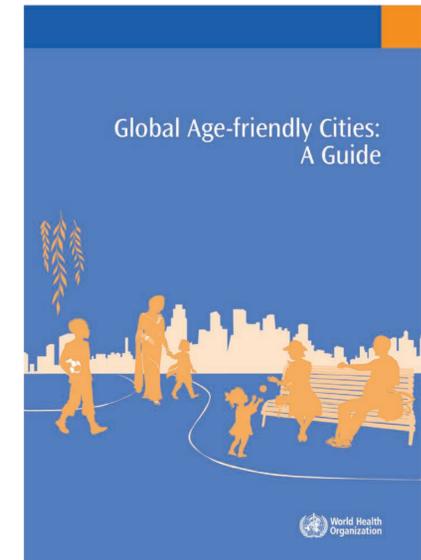
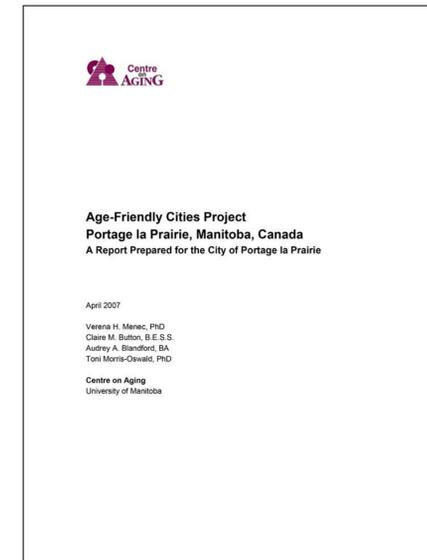
Community consultation

## Age-Friendly Community

An age-friendly community is not only good for seniors, but also for the population as a whole. The World Health Organization's *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)* concludes that there is a need for cities to become age-friendly as the proportion of the global population above 65 years of age continues to rise. Portage la Prairie, which is recognized as an age-friendly community by the World Health Organization, is not an exception to this trend. At present, roughly 12% of Portage's population falls into the 65+ bracket. The age-pyramids of Portage la Prairie shown on **Board 1**, indicate that this share is likely to increase in the future.



## Major Documents



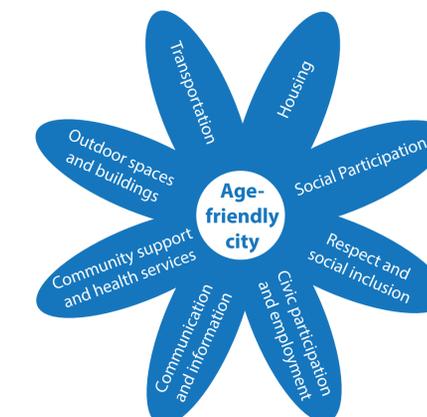
### World Health Organization - *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)*

On a global scale, as cities grow, so does their share of residents over the age of 65. The World Health Organization's *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide* was published in 2007 to help engage global cities to become more age-friendly. The document is organized into eight specific domains of age-friendliness: buildings and open spaces, transportation, social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services. The report concludes that there is an urgent need to develop planning policies and built environments that enable the ageing population to live an active and complete life.

### Centre on Aging - *Age-Friendly Cities Project: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada (2007)*

Research specific to age-friendliness was conducted in 33 cities across the world and Portage la Prairie was one of those cities. As part of the Age-friendly Cities Project, the University of Manitoba's Centre on Aging focused on Portage la Prairie. Its report was published in early 2007. The study called together focus groups to gather firsthand experience and perspectives regarding the eight domains of age-friendliness. This project offered insights into the condition of age-friendliness in Portage. For detailed information, see **Boards 3, 4, 5 and 6**.

## Age-Friendly Domains



The World Health Organization's *Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)*, outlines the eight domains of age-friendly cities. For the purpose of this project we have considered four of the eight domains:

- Social participation
- Buildings and open space
- Transportation
- Housing

## Why It's Important

Portage la Prairie has a strong social support system. The wide range of community programs and support groups offered in the city provide opportunities for the creation of social ties between older adults. The Herman Prior Centre is an asset to older adults, offering social and volunteer activities. Volunteer opportunities allow individuals to participate actively in their communities.



## Age-Friendly Cities Project: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada (2007)

The Age-Friendly Cities Project made a number of recommendations to maintain or strengthen the existing provisions for social infrastructure in Portage la Prairie:

- Expand intergenerational activities and programs that encourage interaction between youth and older adults (p. 8).
- Continue to use a variety of ways to provide information to older adults, as there is not a single mechanism capable of reaching everyone (p. 10).
- Continue to provide a wide range of activities for older adults at existing facilities like the Herman Prior Centre and Island Park (p. 9).
- Consider expanding the hours and range of activities offered at existing facilities (p. 9).
- Consider providing transportation to existing facilities to allow participation in activities, especially during the evening and weekends (p. 5).
- Formally recognize the existing older adult volunteer base and encourage promoting volunteer opportunities to a wider range of residents in the city (p. 11).
- Consider completing an inventory of the health and community services that are available to older adults (p. 12).

## Portage la Prairie Today



The Herman Prior Centre



Island Park



The Herman Prior Centre Friday Afternoon Dance



Portage Service for Seniors

## Strengths

- The existing range of community services and activities available
- Strong efforts are made to provide options for intergenerational activities
- The small size of Portage la Prairie is an asset for building strong social networks

## Challenges

- There are barriers to accessing existing community services and activities due to the lack of public transportation options
- Providing clear communication about social events and activities to older adults
- Current volunteers in Portage la Prairie is not formally recognized for their efforts

## Existing Social Infrastructure

### Community Attractions

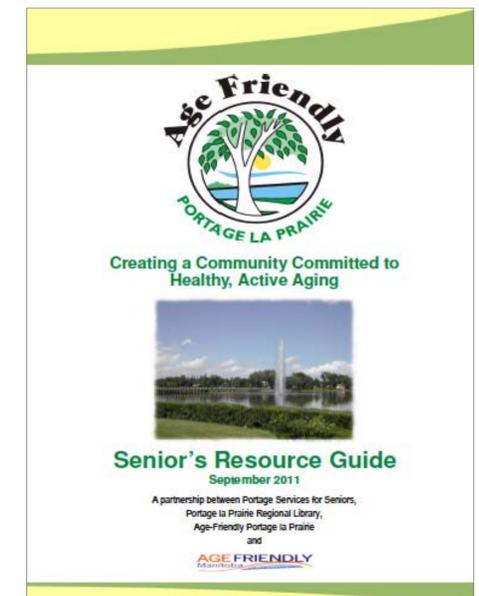
- Fort la Reine Museum Pioneer Village
- Herman Prior Centre
- Island Park
- Mayfair Farms
- PCU Centre
- Portage la Prairie Regional Library
- Splash Island Water Park

### Major Community Events

- Concerts in the Park
- MB Hydro Power Smart Island of Lights
- Portage Ex
- Portage Potato Festival

### Social Support

- Herman Prior Health Care and Support Groups
- Herman Prior Senior Centre Meal Program
- Meals on Wheels Program
- Portage and District Arts Council
- Portage Fitness Co-op
- Portage Handi-Van
- Portage Public Health Services
- Portage Services for Seniors



Senior's Resource Guide - a partnership between Portage Service for Seniors, Portage la Prairie Regional Library, Age-Friendly Portage la Prairie and Age-Friendly Manitoba

"You know, people know one another, it's not a big city. And this is it, when you know one another you help one another" - Age-Friendly Cities Project Seniors Focus Group



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City Planning  
December 2014

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## Why It's Important

The various forms of transportation that exist in Portage la Prairie today play an integral role in how the city is shaped and how its citizens move around. While the majority of residents currently get around by private automobile, a comprehensive system of buses and active transportation routes can compliment the existing roadway network and offer older adults more options to get around the city.

A public bus transportation system would address the disadvantages faced by older adults with limited mobility. A system could provide an affordable option for all residents to get around Portage at most hours of the day, and could reduce dependence on private shuttle services and the Handi-Van.

Active transportation - namely, walking and cycling - will allow people the opportunity to improve their physical health, and reduce stress and dependence on Portage's roadway network. Properly designed infrastructure will create safe spaces for people to cycle and walk comfortably. More importantly, it will give older adults more choice in transportation mode and freedom of mobility.

## Age-Friendly Cities Project: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada (2007)

The Age-Friendly Cities Project made a number of recommendations regarding transportation in Portage la Prairie:

- Sidewalks and walking paths should be constructed for accessibility to older adults and those who may have mobility issues (p. 5).
- A route-based system of shuttle buses could be considered (p. 5).
- Affordable evening transportation options are required; the cost of Handi-Van service in the evening should be reduced (p. 5).
- Greater flexibility should be built into current transportation services.

## Community Consultation Feedback

- There was a strong preference for high-quality pedestrian and cycling infrastructure throughout the city, as well as a public bus transportation system.
- A core area active transportation loop was identified as priority infrastructure that would be used by older adults in all seasons.
- Participants preferred a public bus transportation system over carpooling and carsharing.
- Participants were also interested in a taxi-reimbursement and information program (TRIP) and enhanced taxi-pass program for Portage.

## Portage la Prairie Today



Residential road lacking sidewalks



Saskatchewan Avenue facing east



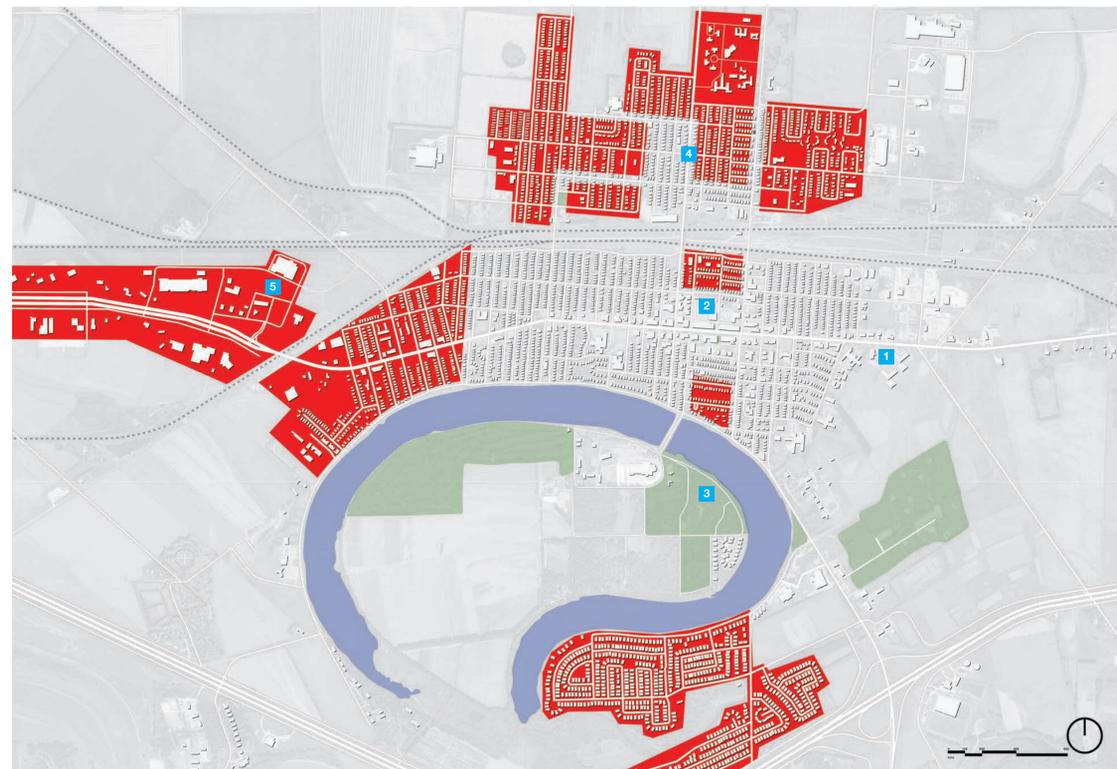
Saskatchewan Avenue facing east

### Strengths

- A small and compact city is amenable to cycling, walking, and public bus transportation.
- Island Park and Crescent Lake shared use path is currently well-used by pedestrians and cyclists.
- Wider arterial streets are able to support active transportation infrastructure (e.g. bike lanes).

### Challenges

- There is a lack of existing on-street active transportation infrastructure.
- Many residential areas have no sidewalks.
- Where there are sidewalks, many are in poor condition and may be hard to navigate for older adults or people with mobility issues.
- North/south pedestrian and cycling connections from the downtown area to Island Park are inadequate.



## Ideas



Traffic-calmed streets and bike boulevards that discourage high-speed, free-flowing traffic can be installed on local roads to make cycling and walking safer and more enjoyable. Some elements of traffic-calming that can be incorporated may include traffic circles, speed humps, lower speed limits, and raised crosswalks at intersections. Additionally, key crosswalks can be paved with different textures and landscaped to make them easier to navigate by older adults and people with mobility issues.



A public bus transportation system can connect a variety of destinations around Portage la Prairie with a single, modest loop. In the long term, the system can incorporate a variety of routes or loops that can connect residents and older adults to all parts of the city, including the residential areas north of the rail lines.

The map on the left shows all the areas of Portage la Prairie that do not have sidewalks (outlined in red). The corresponding table below shows approximate walking distances between major points in the city.

	1 Seniors' Housing Cluster	2 Herman Prior Centre (Downtown)	3 Island Park	4 Tupper St N & 6th Ave N	5 Western commercial district
5 Western commercial district	4.0 km	3.0 km	3.5 km	3.7 km	-
4 Tupper St N & 6th Ave N	2.2 km	1.0 km	2.1 km	-	-
3 Island Park	2.0 km	1.1 km	-	-	-
2 Herman Prior Centre (Downtown)	1.2 km	-	-	-	-
1 Seniors' housing area	-	-	-	-	-

For more options, and ideas for how to apply these options in Portage la Prairie, see **Boards 8 and 10**.



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## Why It's Important

The consideration of well maintained and aesthetically pleasing buildings and open spaces is important in Portage la Prairie. Buildings and open spaces influence the accessibility and ease in which older adults attend social activities and experience their surroundings. Inaccessible built environments pose a challenge for older adults choosing to age-in-place or age-in-community. A connected, accessible, and an overall high-quality built environment strengthens the social fabric of a city.

## Age-Friendly Cities Project: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada (2007)

The Age-Friendly Cities Project recommended a number of improvements for the existing built environment in Portage la Prairie:

- Construct sidewalks in areas of the city that lack them (p. 3).
- Replace the existing sidewalks with the quality materials and non-slip surfaces (p. 4).
- Maintain of public and open spaces during extreme weather conditions, such as sidewalk clearing after snowfall (p. 4).
- Consider the accessibility of existing and future buildings that older adults may choose to use (p. 4).

## Community Consultation Feedback

- Comments about the overall existing public and open spaces were positive.
- The walking path network and Island Park are aesthetically pleasing areas that are used for leisure activities.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the safety of vacant lots on Saskatchewan Avenue.
- Lack of sidewalks and intermittent lighting throughout the city were also worrisome to community members.

## Portage la Prairie Today



Saskatchewan Avenue facing west



Vacant lot on Saskatchewan Avenue



Residential road lacking sidewalks



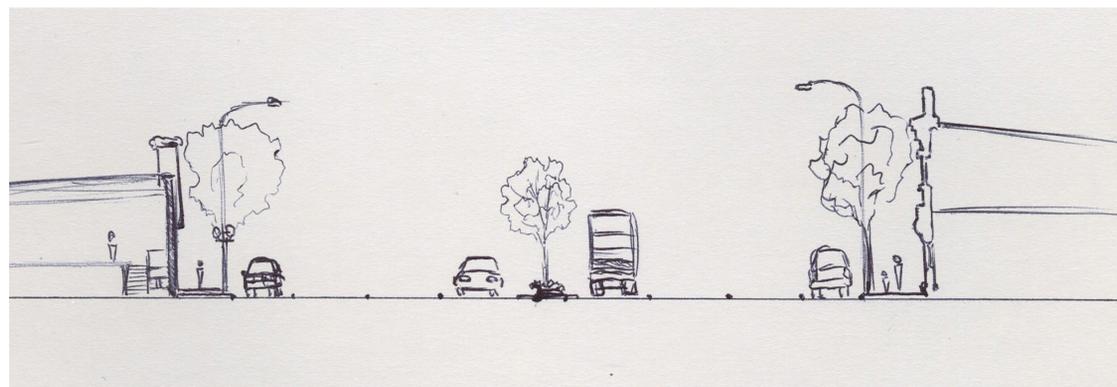
Island Park Bridge

### Strengths

- The existing public and open spaces are an asset for leisure activities
- Character of historic buildings located in the downtown strip
- The city-wide shared use path (currently in the early stages of implementation)

### Challenges

- Perceptions of safety
- Lack of sidewalks in many areas of the city
- Existing sidewalks are a barrier to accessibility
- Existing streetscape and aesthetic appeal of Saskatchewan Avenue



Cross section of Saskatchewan Avenue facing west

## Ideas



Transit Village Town Square, Contra Costa, CA.



Lake Saint Louis Boulevard, St. Louis, MO.



Wayfinding signage, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK.

For more options, and ideas for how to apply these options in Portage la Prairie, see **Boards 7, 9 and 4.**

## Why It's Important

The ageing population represents a diverse and growing group with many different preferences and needs for services, care and lifestyle choices. As the number of older adults continues to increase, considerations begin to arise about the changing needs of this group. Most seniors prefer to remain in their homes, if possible. Many seniors relocate, however, either by choice or out of necessity.

Accessibility considerations are important, as well as accommodating for seniors who want to age-in-place. The greatest challenges exist, however, for seniors who choose to relocate.

## Age-Friendly Cities Project: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada (2007)

The Age-Friendly Cities Project made a number of recommendations regarding housing in Portage la Prairie:

- Create additional, affordable housing options such as assisted living, homes designed for seniors, and housing for low-income seniors (p. 7).
- Ensure that the location of new housing, particularly housing targeted at older adults is carefully studied (p.7).
- Develop (and update on an ongoing basis) an inventory of housing options that are available in Portage la Prairie. Such an inventory might usefully be prepared by a senior organization, such as the Herman Prior Senior Centre (p. 7).

## Community Consultation Feedback

- Participants wanted to know more about co-housing, bylaws related to secondary suites, and the difference between housing co-ops, cohousing, and condominiums.
- Participants were interested options that incorporated a mixture of tenures, incomes, and ages.
- A need was expressed for low-income seniors' housing and assisted living options.

## Portage la Prairie Today

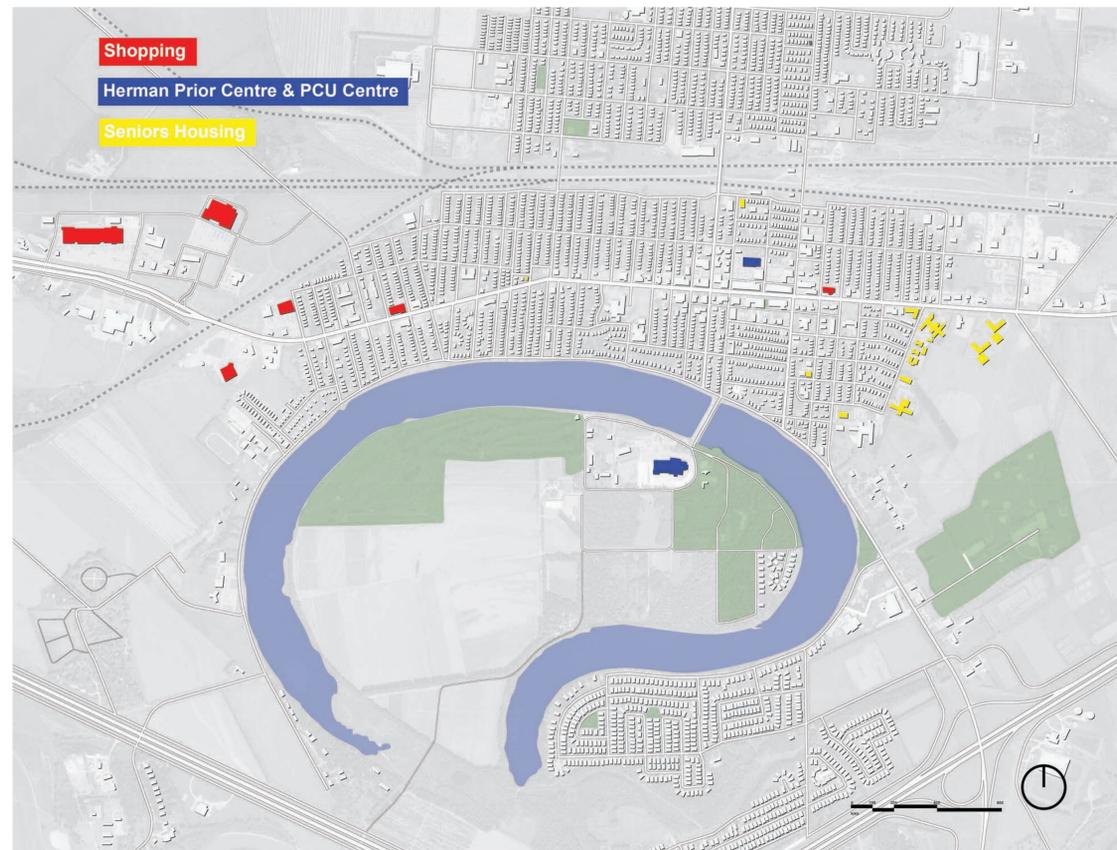


### Strengths

- An inventory of housing options in Portage la Prairie has been developed and can be found in the Portage la Prairie Senior's Resource Guide.
- Some variety of housing options exist, and have been expanded since the release of the *Age-Friendly Cities Report: Portage la Prairie: Manitoba, Canada* (2007).  
These include:
  - Life Leases
  - Independent living
  - Personal care homes
  - Subsidized housing
  - Options with congregate meals and activities

### Challenges

- There are currently no assisted living options in Portage la Prairie.
- Most of the seniors' housing is located on the eastern periphery of the city, isolated from services and amenities, gathering places, shopping, and leisure.
- Seniors' housing complexes do not offer shuttle services.
- There is a lack of affordable housing options for low-income seniors.



## Ideas



Secondary suites



Street-oriented housing



Bridge Meadows, in Portland, Oregon, integrates affordable housing for families who adopt foster children and people age 55 or older.

For more options, and ideas for how to apply these options in Portage la Prairie, see **Board 12**.



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## Why It's Important

In September 2014, HTFC Planning & Design and MMM Group were hired by the City of Portage la Prairie to develop a strategy for a revitalization of Saskatchewan Avenue. The scope of this ongoing work includes focus group meetings with key stakeholders, preparation of conceptual designs, potential cost estimates, and implementation strategies. For our initial documentation of Portage, we identified Saskatchewan Avenue as a main area of focus for possible age-friendly implementations. Because work has already begun on Saskatchewan Avenue's revitalization, we will provide an age-friendly assessment of the current schematic plans provided by HTFC Planning & Design and MMM Group as part of our strategies for improvement.

As well as an evaluation of Saskatchewan Avenue's age-friendly potential, we identified the existence of many empty lots and open spaces that are prime locations for future infill development. The downtown area in Portage contains the vast majority of social and health related amenities and encouraging future development in the area will be key to creating a welcoming and vibrant downtown core.

## Long Term Infill Possibilities

In this conceptual image, existing buildings are shown in white and potential infill has been highlighted in red. There is a large focus around Heritage Square and filling existing empty lot spaces.



## Existing



The eastern portion of Saskatchewan Avenue.



Saskatchewan Avenue looking east.



Crosswalk at Saskatchewan Avenue and 2nd Street North East.

## Strategies for Improvement

### 1. Table top intersections and bump outs

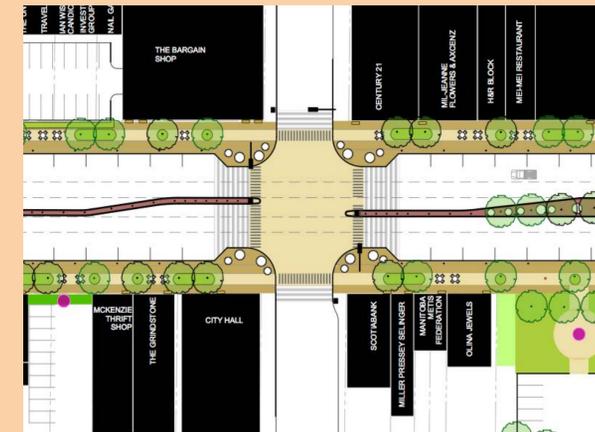


Image Credit: HTFC Planning & Design, MMM Group

The addition of table-top intersections involves raising all road and bike lanes to the level of the sidewalks around it. This enables pedestrian crossings to be at grade, which increases visibility.

Secondly, bump outs decrease the distance between sidewalks to make for shorter walks across intersections.

### 2. Protected bike lanes

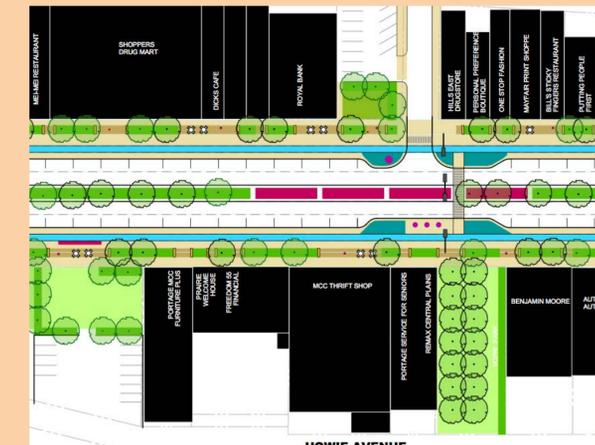


Image Credit: HTFC Planning & Design, MMM Group

The addition of protected bike lanes on either side of Saskatchewan Avenue promotes cycling for all ages and abilities by creating safe, accessible, convenient, and viable active transportation options.

Implementing bike lanes can also increase activity and vibrancy of downtown Portage.

### 3. Princess Avenue greenways

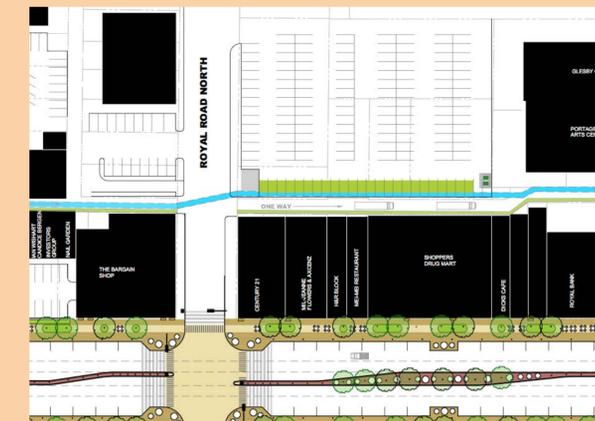


Image Credit: HTFC Planning & Design, MMM Group

The inclusion of greenways behind Saskatchewan Avenue enhances an area that is already heavily used.

By routing bikes through this space and adding necessary lighting, wayfinding, and tactile streetscaping, this space will be accommodating to all those who frequent downtown Portage.

## Why It's important

The availability of transportation facilities plays an important role in the overall wellbeing of individuals. The transportation options currently available in Portage la Prairie are limited. This poses serious constraints on the mobility needs of seniors, people with disabilities, and those who do not have access to an automobile. It is more challenging for older adults residing outside the seniors' housing units, especially in the northern part of the city.

## Strategies for Improvement

### Short-term Bus Route

The short-term bus route is a single loop system which can be introduced in Portage la Prairie on a trial basis for a fixed period of time.

- The origin is from the seniors' specific housing cluster and covers all important areas, except the south.
- The route is 15km long.
- Service frequency is once every 35 minutes.
- The decision to provide service availability can be made depending on the demand.
- A 400m buffer from the bus stops will cover 78% of the city area.

### Long-term Bus Route

The long-term bus service in Portage la Prairie can have three separate bus routes. Combined (one-side) length of all the three routes is 15km.

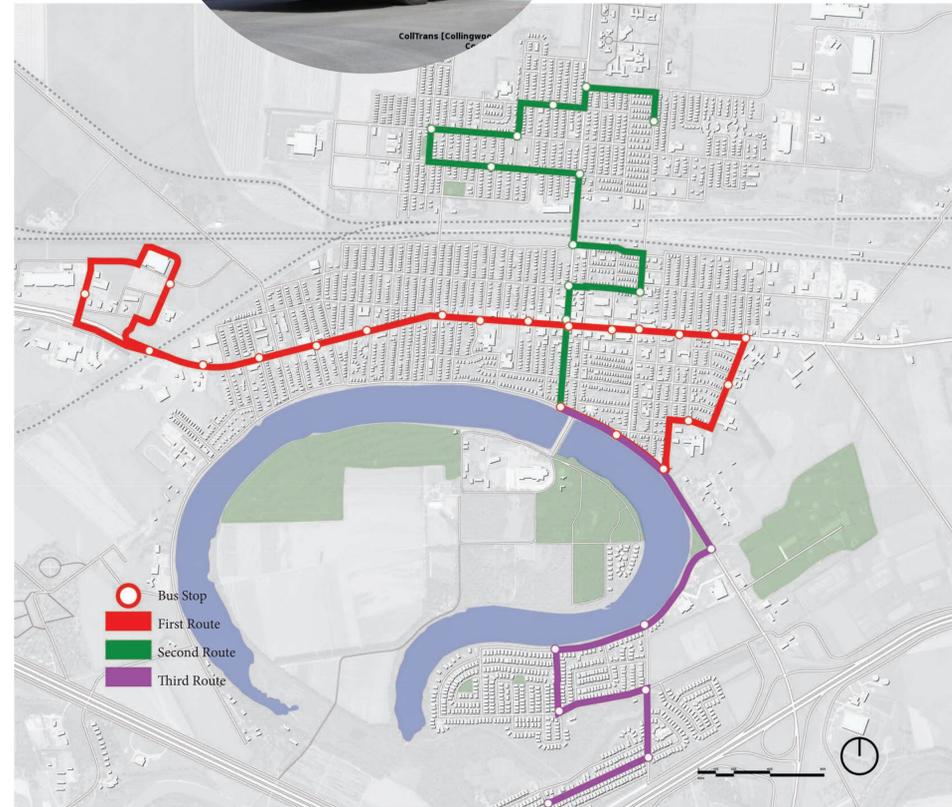
- The origin is from the intersection of Royal Road South and Crescent Road West.
- Covers all the important areas of the city.
- Service frequency is once every 75 minutes, but it can be improved with more buses.
- The decision to provide service availability can be made depending on the demand.
- A 400m buffer around the bus stops will cover 90% of the city area.

### Other Options

Besides introducing conventional transit, few other possibilities can be considered to widen the transportation options available in Portage la Prairie. These options include the Transportation Reimbursement and Information Program (TRIP) and an enhanced taxi-pass program. Feedback from the community confirms that options such as carshare and car-pool are unlikely to be successful in Portage, especially due to concerns of safety.

## Conventional Transit

There are several small communities which have conventional transit facilities, like Collingwood, ON. Besides benefiting the transport disadvantaged in the city, introducing a conventional transit facility has the potential to transform Portage la Prairie into a lively urban centre. The maps below show the two possible bus routes in short and long-term times frames. More details about the bus route options are given below.



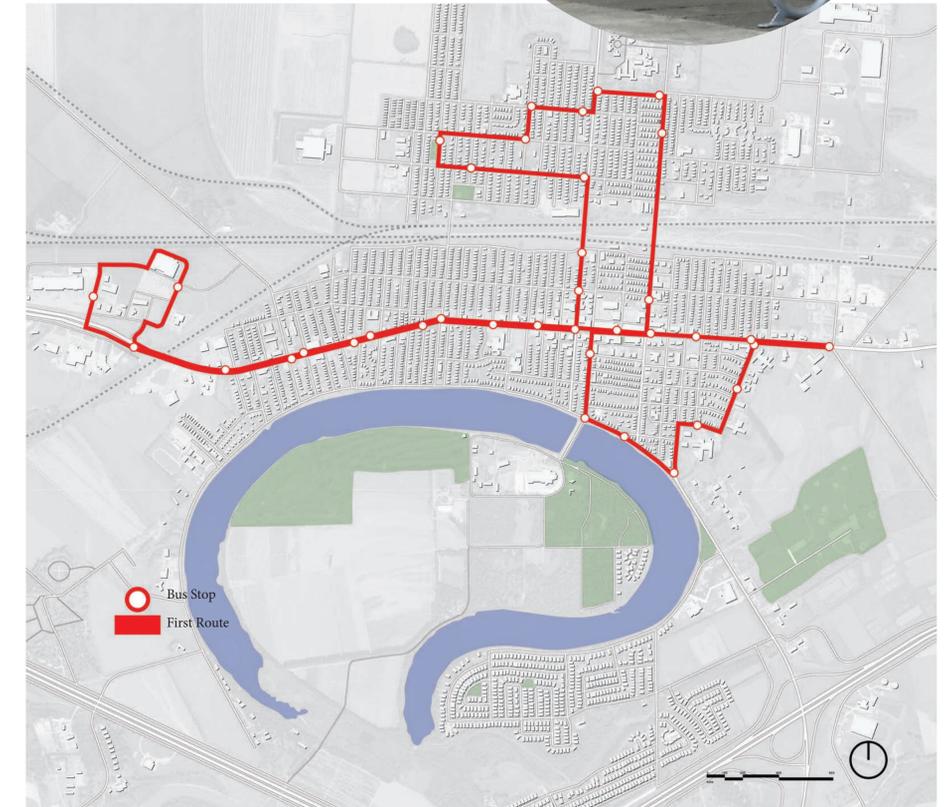
## Enhanced Taxi-pass Program

An enhanced taxi-pass program provides a cheaper travel options to low-income populations. This program has been successful in small communities like Peace River, AB and Oakville, ON. The holders of taxi-passes get 40 subsidized tickets per month.

## Bus Shelters Bus Stop Seating

The proposed transit routes have 33 bus stops in the short-term plan and 40 in the long-term plan. Taking into account the financial constraints, it is impractical to suggest bus shelters at every bus stop. However, all weather bus shelters can be placed at selected bus stops adjacent to important locations such as the seniors' housing cluster in the east, City Hall, the shopping area in the west, and Portage la Prairie General Hospital.

Though it is not feasible to have all-weather bus shelters at every bus stop across Portage la Prairie, it is necessary to ensure a minimum comfort level for all passengers. Thus, it is necessary to provide seating at every bus stop. The provision of transit



## Transportation Reimbursement and Information Program (TRIP)

This program provides free transit option to older adults. Customers recruit the driver, usually a friend or a neighbour. The customer then receives reimbursement from the City and gives it to the driver. The City manages the TRIP program and provides transportation information to seniors.





## Why It's Important

Including inclusive streetscaping in public and open spaces results in enjoyable areas for people of all ages and mobility levels. Streetscaping aids in improving the built environment, thus improving pedestrianism, active transportation networks, public transport routes and connectivity to the cluster of seniors' specific housing located in eastern Portage la Prairie. Streetscaping elements also enhance the safety of cities by encouraging use of public and open spaces through the day and evening.

## Strategies for Improvement

HTFC Planning and Design has identified an area in Portage la Prairie that needs streetscape improvements in the short-term - specifically a stretch of Saskatchewan Avenue within the downtown strip. We have recognized other areas of the city in need of improvement; a larger portion of Saskatchewan Avenue, Tupper Street North, Royal Road South, 9th Street Southeast, and portions of Queen Street East and 5th Street South East. These priority areas connect Saskatchewan Avenue to north Portage, the seniors' specific housing cluster and Island Park.

### Short-term Strategies

- Strategies that are feasible in the short-term include tactile wayfinding, urban landscaping, formal seating and increasing the stock of pedestrian lighting.

### Long-term Strategies

- Strategies that Portage may consider in the long-term include providing public toilet facilities and improving the existing Island Park Bridge. Improvements to the existing network of sidewalks is a priority along with the construction of new and durable sidewalks in areas currently lacking them.

## Urban Landscaping

Planters and tree canopies are both aesthetically pleasing and practical streetscaping elements. Planters can be used as barriers to separate the sidewalk from vehicle traffic and as places for informal seating. Tree canopies provide shade during extreme weather conditions.



## Tactical Wayfinding

Tactile wayfinding can help guide those with visual impairments when walking on sidewalks. Changes in surface material and colour at corners and crosswalks alert users as to when they are approaching intersections.

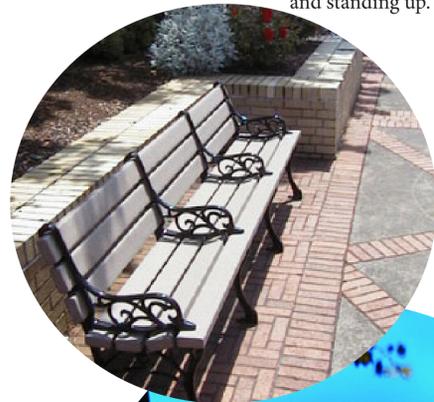


## Public Toilet Facilities

Well lit, properly secured and durable public toilet facilities with room for wheelchair accessibility can be built for users of public and open spaces. In the long-term, Island Park could be considered as an area for the investment of public toilets.

## Formal Seating

Benches should be implemented regularly along sidewalks. They act as resting places and areas for socializing. Benches should have more than two arm rests to aid those with limited mobility in the action of sitting down and standing up.



## Pedestrian Scale Lighting

Pedestrian scale lighting should be implemented regularly along sidewalks. Lighting improves the visibility and safety of public and open spaces during the evening.

## Multi-Modal Island Park Bridge

The Island Park Bridge, as it exists now, is a single-use bridge for vehicle traffic. Investing in a new bridge with room for multiple forms of transportation and streetscaping elements will connect Island Park to the rest of the city.





## Why It's Important

Portage la Prairie is a close-knit community that thrives on being a bustling regional centre. By providing safe and comfortable spaces for people to walk, cycle, and interact, a comprehensive active transportation will only strengthen the positive qualities that Portage is already known for.

Portage's size makes getting around on foot and by bicycle relatively easy. Walking and cycling distances between many destinations within the city are manageable and can be done with ease given the city's topography and grid network of streets.

More importantly, with features like traffic-calmed streets and enhanced crosswalks, an active transportation network will give older adults more options to get around town. Whether for recreational or utilitarian purposes, walking and cycling will be seen as a safe, comfortable, convenient, and viable option for getting around the city.

## Strategies for Improvement

### Short-term Strategies

- The smaller core area loop can be installed to connect the downtown area with other destinations including Crescent Lake, Island Park, and places of employment in the western commercial district. The loop would include traffic-calming measures (e.g. reduced speed limits and traffic circles) that increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
- With the existing high usage of the Crescent Lake shared use path, and ample green space spanning the length of it, exercise equipment could be installed in the short-term to promote more physical activity and social interaction.

### Long-term Strategies

- A bigger loop that extends north of the rail lines could be installed in the future, connecting downtown destinations and employment areas with residential neighbourhoods.
- Additional pedestrian connections to the residential neighbourhoods north of the rail lines can be improved with an enhanced railway crossing that can be installed with the larger active transportation loop in the future.



## Traffic-calmed Streets

Royal Road and 18th Street could be traffic-calmed for the benefit of both cyclists and pedestrians. These routes can strengthen north/south connections between Crescent Lake to the shared use path adjacent to the railway tracks.



## Shared-use Path

The shared use path will be a facility that can be used by all active modes of transportation for either recreational or utilitarian purposes. The path will act as a primary east/west connection between the core area and the commercial district to the west. For maximum comfort and safety, the shared use path should be lit and cleared regularly during the winter.

## Pedestrian Railway Crossing

An enhanced pedestrian railway crossing could be installed under the Tupper Street bridge. This crossing could encourage more pedestrian activity between the residential area and the downtown core area.



## Pedestrian Crossings

Pedestrian crossings at intersections can be enhanced through the use of different materials, like paving stones or cement. Crossings with contrasting colours and textures can be more easily navigated by people with visual impairments. Crosswalks can also be raised to the same height of the surrounding sidewalk to make crossing easier for people with mobility issues.

## Exercise Stations

Popular in cities and towns across the Canada (Red Deer and Calgary, AB and Carman, MB), these outdoor exercise stations could be situated along the shared use path north of Crescent Lake. These machines not only provide an opportunity for more impromptu physical activity, but also foster social interaction.



## Buffered Bike Lanes

The wider roads on 8th Street and 3rd Street are well suited for buffered bike lanes. These bike lanes could be created by painting thick lanes onto the pavement. The extra space created by these buffers provide more visibility and room for vehicles to pass, creating a safer and more comfortable cycling experience.

## Why It's Important?

Heritage Square is located at the centre of Portage la Prairie on Royal Road North, surrounded by the Herman Prior 55+ Centre, The Portage la Prairie Regional Library, the William Glesby Performing Arts Centre and Art Gallery, Portage Credit Union, and several shops along Saskatchewan Avenue including Shoppers Drug Mart. Heritage Square is a major hub of activity, especially for seniors. Currently, the square only exists as a free-of-charge parking lot, experiencing high volumes of use throughout the week. As well, there are several opportunities for infill development and the intensification of buildings and spaces within close proximity to Heritage Square.

## Strategies for Improvement



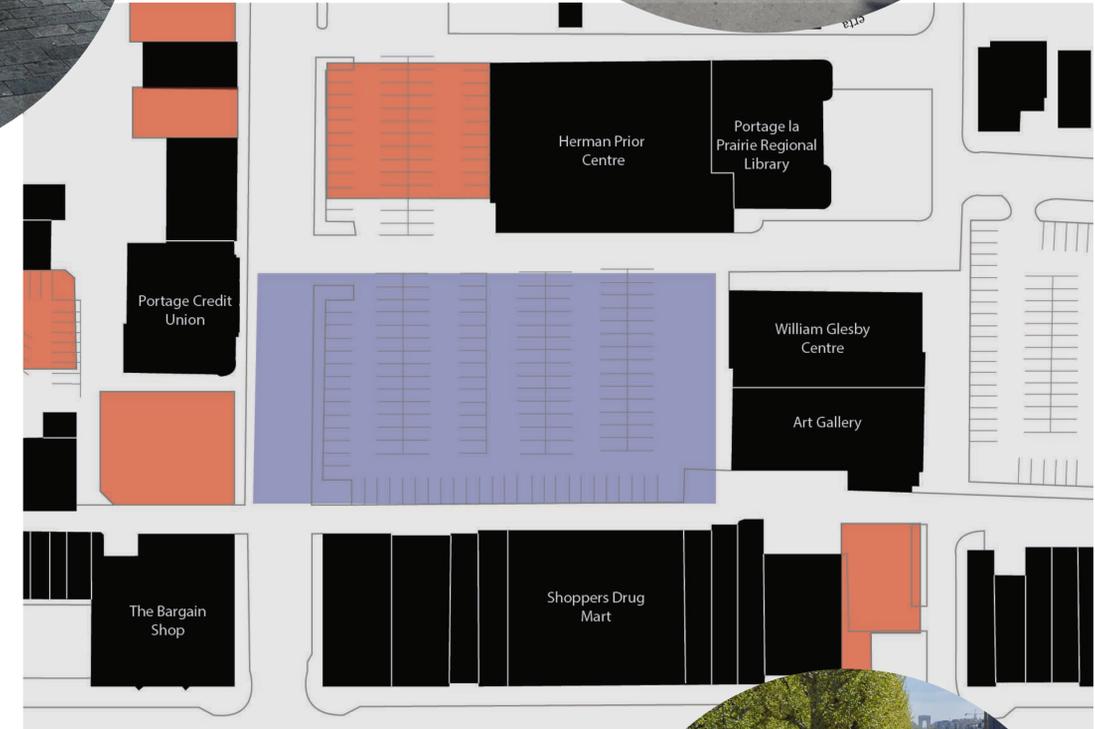
## Pavement Types

There is potential for strategies to increase visibility and create a larger, multi-use space through the installation of differing pavement surfaces. These surfaces can move from Heritage Square into the street, thus creating a sense that the square extends across the street, connecting pedestrian areas without impeding traffic.



## Traffic Calming

Strategies for traffic calming include narrowing streets, table-top intersections, increasing bump-outs and adding a chicane or s-b-bend. These strategies work to signal the driver that they are entering a pedestrian space and thus slowing down traffic. Not only does this create a well defined pedestrian space, but allows for a much safer and age-friendly street.



Heritage Square has been identified as a major area of focus and several strategies have been suggested in this project. These strategies are focused on creating a more pedestrian friendly space that fully supports both an active parking lot and major cultural events. Increasing the activity and usage of Heritage Square will bring the focus to the downtown area of Portage la Prairie. Together, with the extensive changes being proposed by HTFC Planning and Design and MMM Group to Saskatchewan Avenue, the downtown has the potential become a destination for residents and visitors.

## Short-term Strategies

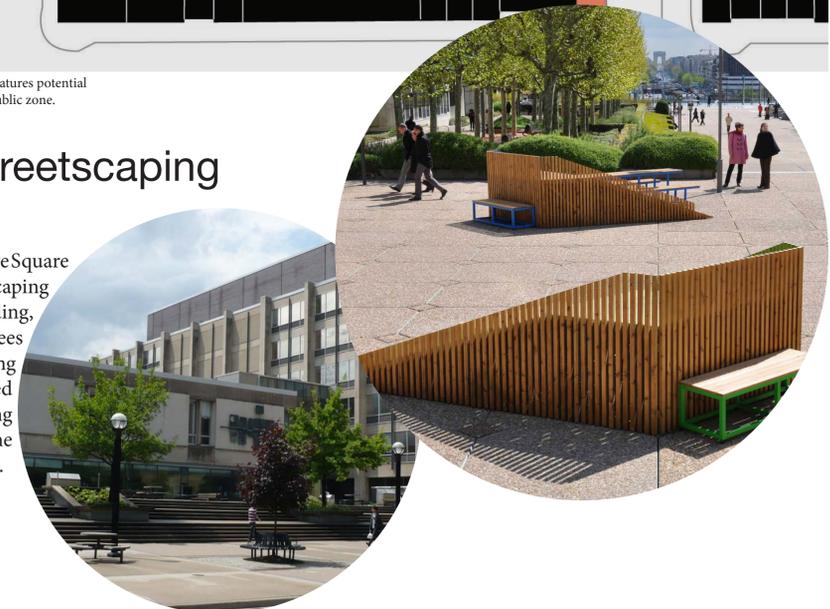
- Strategies include streetscaping along Royal Road North with benches, trees and shrubs, tactile wayfinding, pedestrian lighting and curb cuts.
- Extending Heritage Square into Royal Road North using various surface materials.

## Long Term

- Implementing traffic calming strategies for Royal Road North and within Heritage Square.
- Infill development of empty lots and intensification of existing buildings around Heritage Square.

## Dynamic Streetscaping

Strategies for defining Heritage Square includes age-friendly streetscaping elements like tactile wayfinding, proper lighting, seating, trees and movable planters. Having planters that can be moved according to what is happening in the square lends to the multi-use aspect of the space.



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City Planning  
December 2014

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## Why It's Important

In both the *Age-Friendly Cities Project: Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, Canada* (2007) and our community consultation, participants stressed that there is a need for more seniors' housing as there are long waiting lists for existing units. For older adults who do not drive, the location of their home is crucial. Many older adults rely on friends and family to provide transportation, which can decrease their ability to be independent. Locating seniors' housing in closer proximity to services, amenities and social gathering places can help seniors to retain their independence while promoting active ageing and creating a more walkable community. Housing is a key component in downtown revitalization. Residential development in the central core can help to create the type of human presence needed to support commercial development and vibrant street life.

## Strategies for Improvement

All housing development should consider the following priorities

- Seniors' housing developments should be located within 400m of Saskatchewan Avenue.
- Assisted living options should be developed in Portage as none currently exist.
- Multi-unit options that incorporate a mix of ages, tenures and incomes should be encouraged in future housing development.

## Short-term Strategies

- Infill development could be incorporated along the central section of Saskatchewan Avenue (highlighted on left, darker red) and along the highlighted section of Royal Road South as a strategy to provide more seniors' housing while encouraging active-ageing and supporting current downtown revitalization efforts.

## Medium-term Strategies

- The highlighted area (lighter red on left) shows a 400m buffer around the central section of Saskatchewan Avenue. We have identified this area as a good place to locate new seniors' housing developments.

## Infill Housing

Building on empty lots and using vacant buildings for residential development is a good way to increase the total stock of seniors' housing. It is important that accessibility concerns are a priority for this type of development.



## Street-oriented Houses

Street-oriented houses have decreased setbacks and give a greater feeling of presence to the street. This type of housing is a good option for seniors who want to continue to live more independently, as there is less need for snow clearing and yard maintenance. It is also useful on pedestrian corridors as it can help to bring life to the neighbourhood and contribute to a more "human-scale" street.

## Supportive Housing/Assisted Living

These options have evolved to fill the gap between independent living and personal care homes. Assisted living and supportive housing provide varying levels of service, including meals, housekeeping, social and recreational opportunities, and additional assistance with personal activities (such as bathing or taking medication).



## Cohousing

Cohousing refers to small resident designed, owned and managed communities. Houses can be attached units or single family homes with shared spaces such as kitchens, dining rooms, gathering places for leisure and events, library space, exercise rooms, and gardens. The community may hire caregivers if needed. Mutual neighbour support is a key component, and neighbourhood design is an important consideration.



## Tenure Options

Some tenure options that can be considered wherever housing in Portage is developed include:

- Co-op Housing
- Cohousing
- Rental units
- Life Leases
- Condominiums

## Home Modifications

Modifications to the home environment can enable older adults to continue living independently for longer by removing functional barriers. Many modifications can be made to increase accessibility within the home at minor costs. Programs that assist low-income seniors and people with disabilities in paying for home adaptations include:

- Home Adaptions for Seniors Independence Program (HASI)
- Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities

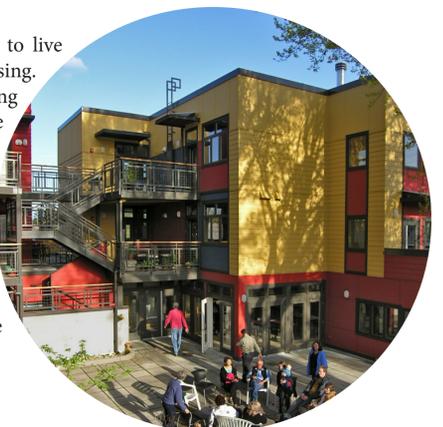
(both offered through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)



Above: Ramp added to allow for wheelchair access. Left: Bathtub modification.

## Mix of Ages, Tenures and Incomes

Not all older adults want to live in senior specific housing. Intergenerational housing can provide an enjoyable living environment for seniors who prefer a more diverse and lively lifestyle. As well, providing affordable suites in new housing developments can help to create more inclusive communities.



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